

# Cruising Guide – Singapore to Darwin via Borneo and the Molucca Islands of Indonesia

## INTRODUCTION

These notes provide a guide to this route based on our cruise in mid 2007 to mid 2008. We cruised at leisure and did not decide on the final destination until half way through. We cruised Singapore to Borneo using the south westerly monsoon of mid 2007, then took the north easterly monsoon of late 2007/early 2008 to passage to Halmahera in the northern Molucca Islands and Ambon, then the westerlies to the Kei Islands when we waited for the start of the south easterlies in April/May to passage to the Tanimbar Islands and Darwin. Our route around Borneo is shown on Chart 1 and our route through Indonesia towards Darwin is shown on Charts 2 and 3.

This is a viable, albeit leisurely, route from Singapore to Darwin. It took us a year but could easily be done in just over half a year by leaving Singapore late in the south westerly monsoon, say in September. It would be possibly to arrive in Darwin much earlier, but this would run the risk of meeting a tropical cyclone in the Arafura Sea.

We took a number of side trips: cruising the east coast islands of Malaysia, trips overland to the interior of Sarawak and Sabah, diving at Sipadan, a cruise up the Kinabatangan River and we visited the Rainforest Music Festival in Kuching. We would recommend all of these. Our cruising notes to the east coast of Malaysia are available from Noonsite and on our website, [www.yachtcarillon.net](http://www.yachtcarillon.net). Cruising notes on the Kinabatangan River are available in the visitor's book at Sandakan Yacht Club. More details of our travels are given on our website.

The notes have been written by Steve and Lyn on Carillon, a Tayana 48. Carillon is a monohull, 14.3m LOA, draft 2m. We hope the notes are accurate and useful, don't blame us if they are not.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

**Indonesia.** Few yachts travel through this part of Indonesia, we did not see a single cruising yacht from leaving Borneo until we arrived at Darwin. There is limited cruising information available.

We used a number of cruising guides to plan our trip through Indonesia:

- Cruising Guide to Southeast Asia, Volume II, Davies and Morgan, 1999, published by Imray, Laurie, Norie and Wilson Ltd and the update available on the publishers' website (the Cruising Guide)
- Cruising South East Indonesia, a Guide to Anchorages, W R Burbridge 1994
- Cruising Guide to Indonesia and Singapore, various authors, 1999
- Cruising the Tanimbar Islands of Eastern Indonesia, Jan Carter, 2005 (The Tanimbar Cruising Guide)

Much of the information in these is out of date and we could not find any more up to date information.

We also used

- Admiralty Pilots
- Sailing Directions issued by the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, US Government
- Various Lonely Planets and Rough Guides

The Cruising Guide is packed with passage information and good for other areas but has little detail on the Moluccas; Burbridge is well written and accurate for anchorages; the Cruising Guide to Indonesia and Singapore was, unfortunately, misleading in some anchorage details; the Tanimbar Cruising Guide (Carter)

was of little use and was poor value; the Admiralty Pilots and Sailing Directions are intended for larger ships but, nevertheless, have some useful information.

**Borneo.** The Cruising Guide was also useful for planning the passage from Singapore to Borneo and around Borneo, although much of the detail on anchorages in Borneo is out of date. Useful cruising notes (The Borneo Cruising Notes) for the west coast of Borneo are available from Borneo Radio (the local Sailmail station), prepared by Backchat and Valhalla, contact them at [radio@bruneibay.net](mailto:radio@bruneibay.net) and equally useful notes on the east coast of Sabah were prepared by Cetatean II. A supplement on the Kinabatangan River was prepared by Lifeline.

## PAPERWORK AND BUREAUCRACY

**Borneo.** There are few problems with paperwork in Borneo. Some comments on procedures are given in the sections on anchorages below, more details are given in the Borneo Cruising Notes.

**Indonesia.** We obtained our CAIT and support letter for our Social Visas through Bali Marina who were helpful and efficient. Note that it is important to get a social visa as this is initially valid for two months and can then be extended on a month by month basis for up to six months; we had ours extended in Ambon with no difficulty. Our visas were issued by the Indonesian Consulate in Kota Kinabalu; there is a consulate in Tawau which can also issue visas. The visa took 24 hours to issue. Bali Marina arranged an extension for our CAIT after our original CAIT had expired. Note that the CAIT and extension can each take more than a month to be issued.

We cleared into Indonesia at Bitung and out at Ambon with no difficulty. Further details are given below in the sections for these ports. We checked in with the Harbourmaster at Ternate but nowhere else. We were boarded by the navy at Ternate who were very friendly and just wanted to check our paperwork. Also the police at Larat in the Tanimbars. We did not have any difficulties with officials at any port and no extra fees were asked for except at Buru (see below). After checking out at Ambon we continued cruising in Indonesia for more than a month. This did not cause any difficulties although we were careful to avoid too many officials.

## PRACTICALITIES

These comments refer to Indonesia. Some comments on practicalities in Borneo are given in the sections on anchorages below, also in the Borneo Cruising Notes.

**Communications.** This is a remote area and this is reflected in the scarcity of local and international communications. We found Internet access at Ternate, Ambon and Tual but mostly the connections did not work or were too slow to be of any use. There is a workable Internet at the Hotel Amans in Ambon. Cell phones worked in the larger towns: Bitung, Ternate, Labuha, Ambon, Tual and Saumlaki. Some of the villages around Ternate could receive the signal from the town. Frequently the lines were so bad as to be useless. There is no cell phone access in the villages or rural areas. There are Wartel in all of the towns but they do not generally have international facilities except perhaps phone calls if the lines are working.

**Money.** There are ATMs in Bitung, Ternate and Ambon but they do not all work with international cards. We tried several ATMs in Bitung and Ternate before we found one that worked. Ambon was better.

The banks in Ambon could change foreign currency. Elsewhere you would have to rely on local moneychangers, not all of whom give good rates.

**Provisions.** Diesel is available everywhere and we had no trouble with contamination. We paid Rp 7,500 per litre in Labuha including delivery to the dock, Rp 7,000 per litre in Ambon plus delivery to the boat (Rp 100,000 for 200L), Rp 6,500 in Banda including delivery to the boat and about Rp 5,000 in Tual.

Alcohol (including beer) is not available in the northern Moluccas. From Ambon southwards beer is available in some of the Chinese provision stores. Typical cost Rp 17,000 for a bottle of Bintang. Hotels and guesthouses usually had cold beer at up to twice this price.

All the towns have markets but the choice is limited and the quality variable, particularly for fruit. Chickens (soft frozen several times) and good fish are available in the markets except in the Kei Islands where the fish selection was very poor and often not fresh. All the best fish here are exported live for the Hong Kong market.

**Security.** The security issues of a few years ago on the east coast of Borneo do not exist anymore but there is reportedly still extensive smuggling so it is best not to be out sailing at night. In Sandakan the police came alongside and asked us to make sure we locked everything up at night, particularly our outboard motor.

Security is always likely to be a problem in Indonesia. In Ambon we felt quite unsafe and did not leave the boat unattended at any time. We were attacked by pirates one night in the Tanimbars.

Security of our dinghy when going ashore was an issue as few Indonesian ports have suitable and safe places to leave a dinghy. We either found a local boatman to look after the dinghy (paying about Rp 50,000 per day, which is equivalent to a good day's wages) or approached a house in one of the stilted villages which are found in most Indonesian ports and asked them if we could tie the dinghy up at their back door. We offered about Rp 20,000 for this which was gratefully accepted but did not seem to be expected. There was no problem leaving the dinghy in the villages except for small boys using the dinghy as a trampoline and filling it with sand.

## **WEATHER**

Weather patterns were generally as predicted in the Pilot Charts:

Singapore/Malaysia to Borneo: the SW monsoon is reliable but can get quite brisk and stormy at times.

West coast of Borneo: we had some superb sailing in the SW monsoon. Best to get to the NW tip of Borneo before the NE monsoon sets in as this can blow at 20kn for days on end. There can be disturbed weather and strong winds late in the SW season if there are low pressure zones in the South China Sea. Best to sit these out and the Sutura Harbour Marina at Kota Kinabalu (KK) is an excellent place to do this.

North and East coast of Borneo: Again we had superb sailing in the NE monsoon. This coast is, however, a lee shore in this monsoon making some of the anchorages difficult.

Northern Moluccas: the NE/NW monsoons were mostly light (<10kn) becoming unreliable as we approached the equator and the ITCZ.

Central and Southern Moluccas: light westerlies (<10kn) with thunderstorms some afternoons and in the early hours of the morning. We were in the ITCZ while in the central Moluccas.

Weather forecasting is good from both Singapore and Malaysia. Once in Indonesia there is no reliable local weather forecasting. We used GRIB files from Sailmail and weatherfax from Australia.

## **ANCHORAGES IN BORNEO**

Only brief notes are given here for anchorages south of KK as these are documented fully in the Borneo Cruising Notes. We made our landfall from Malaysia at Miri; if coming from Singapore landfall could be made at Santobong, near Kuching. It would then be possible to make a side trip up the Rejang River.

There are plenty of anchorages along this coast and it can be cruised easily by daysailing.

The coordinates given for anchorages are GPS based on WGS84. Depths, where given, are what we had once the boat had settled on anchor: they have not been corrected for tides.

**Miri Marina:** **04° 22'.99N 113° 58'.17E**

The coordinates are for the centre of the entrance channel at the breakwater. The marina is part of a new development, mainly housing, which has not been started yet. The marina is set in the middle of a wasteland of reclamation. Good pontoons with power, water, rubbish disposal and a security guard. No other facilities until the development is built when there will be a marina club.

The entrance is marked with red and green beacons which are sometimes lit. There is a large statue of a seahorse and a large building on the western breakwater. Give this breakwater a wide berth (<200m) as there is shallow water to the west and a wreck to the SW. Enter the marina from the SW: there is a rather indistinct marker board in the basin to the NE of the entrance to line up on. Depths in the entrance are no more than 2m at LWS so best to enter at mid tide. A swell from the SW (normal in the SW monsoon) can result in reduced depths.

Once in the marina pick up any berth and report to the security guard. The office is a mile or so away.

Clearance into Malaysia can be completed here. Immigration is at Wisma Persekutan to the north of the town centre. Take a taxi from the town centre. Customs are in the building next door but they will probably not be interested if you are entering the country. The harbourmaster (Jabatan Laut) is at an inconvenient location outside the town to the north and few yachts bother to go.

Easy access to Miri town by taxi, marina bicycle or bus. Miri is an oil support town, quite pleasant, with a small expatriate population. Good provisioning and most repairs can be done. Diesel by jerrycan from the town. This is a good base for travelling in the interior of Sarawak.

**Kuala Belait:** **04° 34'.58N 114° 11'.75E**  
**5m mud**

The entrance to Kuala Belait is dredged and maintained for the oil support base. Straightforward access. Best to anchor upstream of the docks for the oil support vessels. Our anchorage is off the yacht club. We did not go ashore but we understand the yacht club is very welcoming. Clearance into Brunei can be done here.

**Jerudong Breakwater (Brunei):** **04° 57'.07N 114° 48'.53E**  
**7m**

The breakwater was reportedly built by the Sultan's brother and is now not used. Good shelter but best to anchor away from the shore where there are several palace buildings. The entrance channel has beacons, not lit at night when we were there.

**Brunei Yacht Club (Muara):** **05° 00'.11N 115° 04'.17E**  
**5.5m**

Either anchor or pick up a mooring if there is one free. Do not cut the corner when entering the port through the marked channel as there are submerged training walls that extend some way out to sea. Clear in to Brunei at the ferry terminal a short distance by dinghy from the anchorage. The yacht club is very welcoming and has a good restaurant. Cheap fuel.

**P Keraman** **05° 12'.79N 115° 08'.54E**  
**4.7m**

Rather exposed anchorage on the way to P Labuan. OK in settled weather. We approached from the east but an approach from the south west looks feasible.

**P Labuan**

**05° 16'.48N 115° 14'.37E**  
**7m mud**

Anchor off the stilted village away from the ferry terminal. This is an essential stop to stock up with duty free alcohol. Dirty and noisy anchorage which becomes very uncomfortable when the SW monsoon is blowing strongly. The Jotun paint dealer keeps a small stock of antifouling if you are planning to stop at the shipyard at Kudat. Otherwise get International paint from Miri.

Best to use the water taxis to get ashore, call them on Ch 67 or just hail one as they go past.

**P Tiga**

**05° 43'.19N 115° 38'.92E**

Anchor almost anywhere off the beach. Picturesque and sheltered anchorage if the SW monsoon is not strong. Good shelter from the NE monsoon. Resort on shore and most yachts visit the thermal mud pools a short walk from the beach. Pleasant walks around the island. There is some shelter from the SW monsoon to the north of the island at **05° 45'.01N 115° 40'.70E** but the swell can work round.

There is reportedly good shelter from the SW swell east of Kuala Penyu (approx **05° 53'N 115° 38'E**).

**Kota Kinabalu****Sutera Harbour Marina**

**05° 58'.15N 116° 03'.35E**

The coordinates are for the entrance channel which is unmistakable, as are the hotel and marina club buildings. It is becoming hard to get into this marina, it is so popular, and much harder to leave. Excellent facilities and KK is a very friendly town. Good base to climb Mount Kinabalu, to visit the interior of Sabah and to dive at Sipadan on the east coast of Sabah.

The marina can provide details for clearing in. Immigration and customs (not needed for clearing in) are at the main port a short taxi ride (about RM10) or a long walk from the town centre. The harbourmaster is near the main port some way to the north (RM70 taxi ride and difficult by bus) so many yachts do not bother him.

There are also anchorages close to Tanjung Aru, off P Gaia and in Teluk Gaia.

Approach from the south can be east of P Mamutik but beware of the reefs. The ferries go through this way. Alternatively the channel between P Manukan and P Manutik is clear but again beware of the reefs. In unsettled weather or when there is a big swell running it is safer to leave P Manukan to starboard.

Best approach from the north is between P Gaia and P Manukan.

The marked channel north of the marina into the town is navigable at all states of the tide. Once through the dredged channel (near the fuel barge) keep close to the shore until near the main town pier where deeper water is found.

**Teluk Usukan**

**06° 22'.18N 116° 20'.49E**  
**10m**

Reasonable shelter from both monsoons but some swell can work in to the bay in a strong monsoon. In settled weather the bays to the north and south of Teluk Usukan can be used. No facilities.

**P Mantanani**

**06° 43'.29N 116° 20'.58E** for the SW monsoon  
**4.5m**

Good sunlight is needed to work in amongst the reefs on the north side of the island. In the NE monsoon good sheltered anchorage can be found to the south of P Mantanani. These islands are better visited in the NE monsoon than the SW monsoon. Village on the south side of the island.

**Teluk Agal**

**06° 49'.36N 116° 39'.38E**  
**6.2m**

Straightforward approach. Good shelter from the NE. No facilities. There are several anchorages between here and the tip of Borneo which are sheltered from the NE monsoon but a swell will roll in if the monsoon is strong.

**Kudat Town**

**06° 52'.52N 116° 50'.35E**

This anchorage provides shelter from both monsoons but there is no reason to come here unless arriving at night as the anchorage at Kudat Marina is better. Clear approach from the ESE, the beacons had lights when we were there.

**Kudat Marina and shipyard**

**06° 53'.51N 116° 51'.45E**

The coordinates are for the centre of the mooring basin. The entrance is at **06° 53'.43N 116° 51'.73E**. There are reefs in the channel on either side of the entrance. Best to enter in the morning as the swell builds up in the afternoon with the sea breeze. Beware the exposed wreck at **06° 59'.3N 116° 50'.5E** if coming from the west.

The dock and travel hoist for the shipyard are directly in front of the entrance: best to be lifted in the morning before the swell sets in. The anchorage is to the right. The anchorage basin is small but has swinging space for two or three yachts. If there are more yachts space can be made by tying to the shore. This is not really a marina yet (although there are various plans to but berths in). It is just a mooring basin but it does offer excellent shelter. The hotel welcomes visiting yachts.

The shipyard is becoming used to dealing with yachts even though their main business is fishing boats. In 2008 they charged us RM 1000 for the lift and chocking, RM 40 per day for hardstanding and RM 50 per day for labour. The hardstanding charges reduce for longer stays and this an economical and safe place to leave your boat. Any work on the boat needs to be supervised and the yard would not be able to manage complicated jobs, for example rigging. Antifouling and mechanical work is ok.

Kudat is a pleasant town and has good markets and a supermarket. Fuel can be obtained at the shipyard but it is expensive. Neither the shipyard or the town have any yacht spares but there are decent hardware stores.

**Banggi Islands**

**07° 07'.56N 117° 05'.76E**  
**13m mud**

Very pleasant anchorage with good shelter from the NE monsoon. Approach from the south west, turning north west into the anchorage. The channel is deep and wide until close to the anchorage. Anchor on the either side of the channel depending on the direction of the wind. There are several alternative anchorages around this area and it would be worth spending a few days exploring. No facilities.

Beware the reef to the south east. There is space either side but good visibility is required.

**P Tigabu**

**06° 52'.90N 117° 28'.28E**  
**16m sand**

Straightforward approach but beware the isolated reefs in the bay close to our anchorage position. Sheltered from the north east, but exposed to other directions.

**P Langkayan**

**06° 30'.25N 117° 54'.89E**  
**21m, mooring**

This is very deep for anchoring but there is a mooring owned by the resort which can be used if they are not using it themselves. Check with the resort on Ch 16 first. Sheltered from the NE monsoon but exposed to other directions. We did not go ashore but other yachts have reported that the resort welcomes visiting yacht crews. The island is reported to have good diving and is in a superb location.

**P Silingaan**

**06° 10'.33N 118° 03'.34E**

This anchorage is exposed to all directions and it did not seem possible to get close to the island to get better protection. Better protection might be found behind P Libarran.

**Sandakan Yacht Club**

**05° 50'.40N 118° 07'.45E**  
**7m mud**

The water is filthy and the anchorage is noisy from water taxis. Nevertheless this is a pleasant spot. The yacht club is welcoming with a swimming pool, gym and good restaurant and the town is friendly with all facilities. The yacht club charges RM10 per day for visiting yachts. Good shelter. Straightforward approach.

The tourist office has good information and enjoys chatting to visiting yachties. Don't miss the restaurant at the English Tea House: King's Seafood just down the coast is also very good.

The visitor's book at the yacht club has cruising notes for the Kinabatangan River which is an interesting diversion. Note, however, that the northern entrance to the river cannot be used when there is any swell and the southern entrance at Dewhurst Bay can have dangerous surf on the bar about 4 miles offshore when the NE swell is running. We had < 1m under the keel at high tide in the surf.

We cleared out of Malaysia at Sandakan. The visitor's book at the yacht club has information. Customs and Immigration are at the port a short taxi ride to the north of the town. The harbourmaster is in the centre of town next to the Milimewa supermarket.

**P Tambisan**

**05° 26'.76N 119° 08'.33E**  
**15m mud**

Entrance to the anchorage is to the east of P Tambisan following the depth contour from the north west. We had 4m over the bar at about half tide. Once in the channel watch for the sand bar on the south side. The best anchorage is beyond the village. Good all round shelter but no facilities.

**Felda Oil Jetty**

**05° 04'.23N 119° 04'.84E**  
**7m sand/mud**

Much better protection than it looks at first, the NE swell did not reach here. Anchor anywhere off the beach. We did not go ashore but others have reported a small village and some shops if you ignore the "no entry" signs.

**P Timbun Mata**

**04° 35'.38N 118° 32'.92E**  
**5.5m mud**

This a delightful spot, very quiet with good shelter. There are many reefs in the approaches, but deep water between and the reefs show up well in good light.

Other anchorages in this area which we did not use are listed below (courtesy of Cetacean II). Many of these are reported to have good snorkelling.

**Dent Haven**

**05° 16'.17N 119° 15'.16E**  
**6m mud.**

Anchor off the beach. The NE swell can roll in.

**P Tetagen** **04° 35'.59N 118° 43'.28E**  
**5m sand.**

Very open.

**Semporna** **04° 28'.69N 118° 37'.16E**  
**7m coral rubble.**

Good facilities in the town.

**Tagassan Bay** **04° 21'.64N 118° 41'.28E**  
**7m mud**

**P Sebatik** **04° 11'.37N 117° 52'.59E**  
**8m mud**

**Tawau** **04° 14'.94N 117° 52'.47E**  
**6m.**

Anchor off the yacht club which is very friendly and has no charge for visitors. Good facilities in town. This is a port of entry where you could clear out of Malaysia. There is also an Indonesian Consulate which can issue Social Visas..

**Roach Reef** **04° 10'.92N 118° 18'.29E**  
**14m.**

Mooring off the resort which can be used if there are no guests.

**P Mabul** **04° 15'.00N 118° 37'.88E**  
**15m sand.**

Diving at Sipadan can be arranged, try Seaventures at the oil rig.

**P Batik Kulambu** **04° 41'.92N 118° 24'.55E**  
**15m sand**

**P Tabawan** **04° 47'.69N 118° 22'.12E**  
**14m coral rubble**

**Lahad Datu** **05° 01'.19N 118° 20'.11E**  
**6m mud/sand.**

Good facilities in town. This is also a port of entry.

**Marowap River** **05° 25'.21N 118° 56'.50E**  
**6m mud**

## **ANCHORAGES IN INDONESIA**

**Bitung** **01° 27'.57N 125° 13'.80E (anchorage)**  
**10m sand/coral**  
**01° 27'.47N 125° 13'.80E (mooring)**



Bitung harbour can be entered from the north or south, both channels are marked. We anchored in the northern end of the bay but moved later to a mooring close by. Our anchorage was too close to a tidal rip, better to anchor behind Sarena Besar. Good shelter from all directions but we were told that all parts of Bitung harbour can get very brisk in strong SW winds: most small boats move out in the SW monsoon.

The resort to the north west has a good restaurant and can arrange laundry. Also diving. There are dive resorts to the east on Lembah Island which we did not visit. This is an attractive anchorage and reasonably quiet.

Alternative anchorages are off the town or off Lembah Island on the south side of the channel opposite the town. Neither of these looked very good to us but they would be more convenient for the town.

We cleared in to Indonesia at Bitung. It is about 2 miles by dinghy from our anchorage to the town where we left our dinghy with a boatman at the public dock and hired ojek (motorcycle taxis) to take us to the various officials who are all located in the back streets behind the port. This took most of the day. Bitung has little to offer, the supermarket was poor but we were told that the fish and vegetable markets were good.

**Ternate** **00° 47'.14N 127° 23'.43E**  
**10m sand/coral**

We anchored to the north of the port first as suggested in the Cruising Guide but would not recommend this: we dragged onto the reef. A better anchorage is to the north of the main pier towards the new mosque. We left our dinghy at one of the two small piers close to the north of the port.

We checked in with the harbourmaster who is in the port complex. The town has a few facilities, decent market and some shops. Few restaurants. The anchorage is very noisy at night and the swell from the north worked its way in. This is not a place to linger.

**Tataleka** **00° 57'.56N 127° 30'.62E**  
**12m sand**

Entrance in good daylight is best. We entered on a transit from Tofiri Island towards a large conspicuous boulder near Teluk Tofiri, passing to the north of the reefs along the shore. Once close to the shore we turned south to get behind the reefs. Good protection: the reefs stop the swell. Friendly village: we were invited ashore and met the whole village. No facilities except for very small shops in the village..

**Teluk Dodinga** **00° 50'.01N 127° 38'.21E**  
**13m mud**

Several of the bays inside Teluk Dodinga have anchorages. We chose the bay just to the south of Kampung Dodinga. Good shelter but open to the west. Very quiet. There is a pleasant walk across Halmahera to the Teluk Bombaneigu on the east coast. Some small shops in Dodinga and there was some fruit for sale outside some of the houses.

**Joji** **00° 21'.30N 127° 38'.17E**  
**13m mud**

Pleasant and quiet anchorage between the islands on the headland. We managed to get out of sight of the village to the south. Good shelter, open to the south. No facilities.

**SW Luluin** **00° 07'S 127° 24'E**  
**5 – 15m sand/coral**

There is a good day stop off the SW tip of Luluin Island. Exposed and poor holding so not suitable for overnight.

**Selat Sambaki**

**00° 21'.61S 127° 19'.54E**  
**15m mud**

There are anchorages along much of the east shore of Selat Sambaki, and possibly also on the west shore. Excellent all round protection and very quiet. No facilities.

**Labuha**

**00° 37'.85S 127° 28'.50E**  
**15m mud**

Not as sheltered as it looks on the chart, but it was quiet overnight. Would be exposed in the west monsoon. Pleasant town with a phone signal and good fish market to the east of the town with a dinghy stop alongside. Fuel is available in jerry cans on the waterfront, decent fruit and vegetable market. We did not bother the harbourmaster.

**Laiwui**

**00° 20'.04S 127° 38'.13E**  
**14m sand**

Poor anchorage, exposed to the north and very close to the village but good holding. Not highly recommended but there are few other options between Labuha and the south east coast of Obi Mayor.

**West of Tg Woka**

**01° 26'S 127° 52'E**  
**22m**

Excellent shelter behind the island to the west of Tg Woka, but deep anchorage.

**Tawa Island**

**01° 32'.98S 128° 03'.32E**  
**13m sand/rocks**

Good all round shelter behind the small island to the west of Tawa Island. Care is needed on the approach to get through the barrier reefs. We approached on a bearing of about 220° towards the south of the island protecting the anchorage. Approach from the north is also possible. The reefs are clearly visible in good light. This appears to be a windy place, we had several squalls of about 25kn over two days.

**Gomumu**

**01° 51'S 127° 37'E**

The Sailing Directions and the charts indicate anchorages here. We could not find anywhere safe for an overnight stop.

**Teluk Kayeli, Buru Island**

**03° 22'.76S 127° 07'.64E**  
**10m sand**

Burbridge reports anchorages on the north coasts of Buru and Seram. These would not have been suitable when we were there as there was a strong swell from the NW.

Tk Kayeli is sheltered and there are several places along the south shore where anchorage may be possible. The sea breeze blew from the north making our anchorage a lee shore but it was quiet at night. The Government facility near the anchorage is a fisheries station which was being opened by the mayor while we were there. We were invited to the reception and met the mayor. There were some junior police officers at the reception who inspected our passports and then instructed us to proceed to the main port at the north of the bay where their boss wanted to interview us. They also demanded unspecified amounts of money from us. Fortunately the mayor had invited to stay at the anchorage where we were as long as we wanted so we did not move. The police left and we did not see them again.

## Ambon, a Cruiser's Survival Guide

A cruise southwards through the Moluccas, or eastwards via southern Sulawesi, towards Darwin almost inevitably results in a stop at Ambon as this is one of the few places to clear out of Indonesia. Ambon is a very hard place to get to like, it is dirty, noisy and decrepit. It has very few attractions. But it is a reasonable place to reprovision and a good place to clear out of Indonesia. Once we found the good anchorages we achieved survival.

**Anchorage.** A swell works into Ambon harbour in the north westerly monsoon, it was about 1m in the centre of the harbour during our visit. This swell works its way through the anchorage at Amahusu used by the Darwin Ambon race, making this anchorage untenable. The swell also works into the anchorage off the fort to the north of town. We found some shelter from the swell in the small bay at Wainitu (**03° 42'.13S, 128° 10'.10E, 12m swinging to 23m, mud**) but in all other respects this anchorage is dreadful.

There were frequent squalls in Ambon harbour during our visit, generally 25kn, one of 38kn, all from the west. The Amahusu anchorage would be a lee shore in these.

There are, however, two excellent anchorages within easy reach of Ambon:

**Ambon – Galala anchorage.** At the north eastern corner of Ambon harbour there is a channel leading into an inner lagoon. The channel is wide and deep (>12m) with beacons and lights and leads into a lagoon some 2.5 miles by 1 mile. Good sheltered anchorage can be found almost anywhere along the west, north and north-east shores of the lagoon. We found a quiet spot at **03° 38'.05S, 128° 13'.77E, about 10m sand/mud**. The centre and the south are deep and there is a naval base on the southern shore which is probably best avoided. Access to Ambon is excellent, bemos run continuously along the road along the southern shore of the lagoon, fare Rp 2,000 from the Galala terminal at the entrance to the lagoon. Try the police base for a safe mooring for the dinghy. The town bemo terminal is at the central market.

**Ambon – Teluk Baguala.** For us this was the best option. Avoid Ambon harbour altogether and enter Teluk Baguala around the south and east of the Laitimore Peninsular. Easy access to the bay between the reefs and once inside there are miles of sandy bottom (occasional rocks) with depths of 5m to 10m. We anchored right in the middle as far from the villages as possible at **03° 37'.53S, 128° 16'.75E, 7m sand**. Very quiet and water clean enough to swim. Access to Ambon is by bemo via Passo at the top of the bay (filthy beach) or, better, from the beach at Natsepa to the east of the new hotel (under construction). Frequent bemos from here to Ambon (Rp 3,000 to 5,000). Some provisions, decent supermarket and market at Passo.

**Facilities in Ambon.** Decent market just north of the river. Bemo terminals in this area. Several supermarkets (poor selection), the best of which is at the Matahari complex south of the river. The banks near here have foreign exchange and there are lots of working ATMs around. Internet (not very good) on Jn Dr Sam Ratulangi almost next door to the supermarket. A haven of quiet in Ambon was the Amans Hotel near the market. Better internet, business centre, international fax, quiet lobby and nobody shouting "hello mister".

Diesel is available. If anchored in the lagoon there are two fuel stations on the road, one near the police base, which would be ok except for large quantities. There is a fuel station near the waterfront south of the market. Best option is to recruit a local speedboat to deliver diesel. We did this through Vence tel 62-81343148519, a local Mr-Fixit who seems to offer services to many visiting yachts.

Laundry at one of the guesthouses. Vence arranged ours.

**Getting around.** We used becak (trishaw) to get from the market/bemo terminals to the supermarket area (local fare Rp 2,000 per person, they will demand Rp 5,000 but we refused to pay more than the local fare). Bemos round town are Rp 2,000 per person, likewise ojek for short distances. Ambon is small enough to walk most places. All bemos have a destination sign on the roof so if coming into town from outside check the roof signs and getting a bemo back is easy.

**Clearing in/out.** We cleared in as we had to stay for a week or so. For just a couple of days clearing in and out at the same time should be ok. To clear in just take the clearance from the last port to the harbourmaster and leave it with him. Nothing more. The harbourmaster is in the conspicuous white building with a blue roof at the south western corner of the Pelni Port. To clear out first visit immigration. This is on the edge of town up a hill to the south east, too far to walk. We took an ojek from the supermarket (ask for Immigrasi, fare Rp 5,000). Usual paperwork, CAIT, boat registration, passports, four copies of the crew list. Then to Quarantine. Either take another ojek from Immigration or jump on any bemo towards town (Rp 2,000). Get off where the bemo turns right just past the big mosque and walk back down this road to the Pelni port entrance. Quarantine is to the left of the entrance at the back of the complex, opposite corner to the harbourmaster. Clearance here took just a few minutes. Then back to the Pelni Port entrance to get a copy of the quarantine clearance, then to the harbourmaster who will issue the harbour clearance. The whole process took us less than 2 hours. Quick, friendly and efficient, no extra fees.

#### **Lease Islands, Haruku**

**Various locations off the headland to the west of the village. Sand and rocks.**

Exposed to the NW and some way offshore.

#### **Lease Islands, Teluk Saparua**

**03° 32'.24S, 128° 40'.74E  
Mooring**

We tried to anchor in several places in this bay but the anchor would not hold: the bottom seems to be rock with a thin layer of mud. The eastern shore might be ok in the SE monsoon but this was a lee shore when we were there. We picked up one of the many moorings in the bay which was very strong.

The south of the Lease Islands did not offer any anchorages as the swell was working in to all the bays. None of the other Lease Islands had suitable anchorages when we were there.

#### **Banda**

**04° 31'.17S, 129° 53'.46E  
30m at anchor, 15m at boat**

Banda is a superb protected anchorage in a stunning location, deep in the centre. The best anchorage for us was on the west side of the bay: we dropped our main anchor in 30m and tied to a tree on the shore with 50m of line. We then dropped a second anchor towards the west as a safety measure. This held us securely in about 15m, some two or three boat lengths from the shore. Alternative anchorages are available around the west and east of the main bay. The locals will want you to anchor in front of the Imperial Hotel at **03° 31'.38S, 129° 53'.46E** as this gives them the best opportunity to visit to sell their wares. However there are many local boats between the Imperial and Maulana Hotels just down the road leaving little space for yachts and the prevailing shore breeze was blowing us on to the shore when we tried this anchorage.

Dinghy access is good and secure at the Imperial Hotel at high tide, otherwise there are public steps with all tide access between the Imperial and Maulana Hotels but this is the town swimming pool in the afternoon. A better bet is to make an arrangement with the Vita guesthouse where there are steps.

The Imperial Hotel was half derelict and closed when we were there, the Maulana Hotel was not much better. There are several excellent guesthouses, try the Mutiara or the Vita, where good dinners with cold beer can be obtained (Rp 40,000 per person for dinner at the Mutiara, Rp 35,000 at Vita) and where you can meet up with other travellers to share boat trips to the outlying islands. Day trips to P Hatta and PP Ai and Rum are not to be missed (about Rp 400,000 per boat for the larger and faster boats). Banda has an interesting history and there is a lot to see. Try a dinghy ride and walk at Lonthoir. The Mutiara did our laundry. Abba and his wife Dilla, the owners of the Mutiara, were especially helpful.

We bought diesel through Hussain who can be contacted through Abba. There is a fuel berth in the village which might be cheaper, but Hussain delivered directly to Carillon for us. Limited provisions are available in the village market. Good fish sometimes.

## **Kei Islands**

These islands are very attractive with some excellent anchorages. We cruised the west shore but with more time there seemed to be good spots on the northern shore and on the western shore of Kei Besar.

**Kei Islands** 05° 35'.87S, 132° 40'.74E  
**Pulau Ut** 10m sand and rocks

Good shelter from the swell behind the reef south of P. Ut. Anchor clear to the south of the pearl farm. There seemed to be more sand and fewer rocks a short distance to the east of our anchorage. No facilities. There is also a good anchorage off the beach at Ohoideertawun, anchor close to the drop off some way from the beach. Savana cottages on the beach is welcoming. A swell from the west will work in here if it is running. There are also good sheltered anchorages either side of the wide channel leading eastwards from P. Ut towards Tual harbour.

**Kei Islands** 05° 36'.29S, 132° 43'.75E  
**Tual Harbour** 13m sand

A quiet anchorage well away from the town and the port. Good market in Tual, not so good in Langur, some shops for provisioning and a few restaurants. Fuel is available in the market on the waterfront or from the fuel station. Internet access is reported but it did not work when we were there. We left our dinghy at one of the stilted houses in Langur just to the south of the bridge between Langur and Tual. Bemos (Rp 2,000) run constantly along the road between Langur and Tual.

**Kei Islands** 05° 39'.77S, 132° 44'.75E  
**Rosenberg Channel** 12m sand, swinging to 8m on the tide

This anchorage gives access to the Tual and Langur from the south. Good shelter but close to the town and not as good as the anchorage to the north. The north and south shores of the Rosenberg channel are cluttered with reefs and pearl farms.

**Kei Islands** 05° 37'.30S, 132° 37'.45E  
**Naimeer** 7m sand

There are several sandy areas along the reefs that border the north west shore of Kei Kecil. Exposed to the west if there is a swell or if there are storms, most of which seemed to have westerly winds when we were there. Attractive beach here and to the south at Pasir Panjang. Some snorkelling but the reefs have been badly damaged by dynamite fishing. Some small guesthouses on Pasir Panjang with a karaoke which is noisy at weekends.

**Kei Islands** 05° 44'.84S, 132° 40'.98E  
**Tetoat** 10m

Good shelter but close to the village.

**Kei Islands** 05° 44'.40S, 132° 39'.84E  
**P Wahru** 15m mud

Good shelter but close to the shore if the winds are from the east.

**Kei Islands** 05° 49'.13S, 132° 36'.07E  
**P Woha** 10m sand and rocks

Top spot. Anchorage is possible almost anywhere in the channel to the north of P Woha. The island, sand spit and reefs give excellent protection from all directions. Good beaches, clear water. No facilities. Easy approach from the south west.

**Kei Islands** **05° 55'.06S, 132° 43'.06E**  
**Teluk Uf** **13m sand and mud**

Excellent shelter from all directions. Easy approach from the south on a bearing of north towards the centre of the bay but beware of the extensive reef off the south east tip of Kei Kecil. Depths in the approach channel between the reefs were >9m. Once in the bay anchor almost anywhere. Mangrove channels in the north of the bay to explore by dinghy.

## **Tanimbar Islands**

These islands do not have much to offer but are apparently frequently visited by yachts from Darwin. Most of the anchorages are well offshore in mangrove bays so the water is quite murky. Beware of the extensive reefs around the coasts of most of the islands and the pirates who operate on the west coast (see below).

**Tanimbar Islands** **07° 09'.54S, 131° 42'.48E**  
**Lutur Harbour** **7m mud**

Good shelter from all directions. Approach from north towards the green beacon (lit when we were there) marking the entrance. The red beacon shown on the chart is not there, just a few piles remain. There is also a white flashing light on the town pier. Beware the reefs on either side of the entrance, also a line of piles from an old jetty reaching half way across the bay from Lutur town, some isolated groups of piles in the bay and large areas of fishing nets. Market and some shops in Lutur. We were boarded by the police soon after arrival who checked our CAIT and asked us to go into town to check in with them and the harbourmaster. We did not go and they did not bother us again.

**Tanimbar Islands** **07° 14'.91S, 131° 28'.07E**  
**North of Bulu Village** **9m mud**

Good shelter except from the south and very quiet. Beware the extensive reefs on either side of the entrance. Approach on a bearing 060° from a waypoint at approximately 07° 15'.25S, 131° 27'.51E. It is also possible to enter the mangrove channel to the north. Hold the starboard side before entering then cross to the centre behind the weed covered reef on the port side. <9m depth. Note, however that this channel is used by local craft and ferries so will be noisier than our anchorage.

**Tanimbar Islands** **07° 15'.54S, 131° 23'.94E**  
**P Ungar** **11m sand**

Attractive anchorage on a sandy patch on the south west of the island. Good shelter. Approach from the west. There is another sandy patch about 0.35 miles to the south with an approach from the south.

*We were attacked by pirates at this anchorage. At 0030 hours we were boarded by two or three men armed with knives or machetes. They stole a number of items of deck gear and some items from our main cabin before we awoke and disturbed them. They then paddled off in a canoe. We lifted our anchor and motored to a safer place.*

**Tanimbar Islands** **07° 32'.16S, 131° 09'.44E**  
**Channel between P Wolas and P Kesru** **12m mud**

Excellent shelter. Approach from the north, the south approach is shallow. Anchor off the beach where there is a seasonal fishing village. Carter reported anchoring here at **07° 32'.46S, 131° 09'.83E** in 16 – 18m.

**Tanimbar Islands** **07° 46'.77S, 131° 04'.24E**  
**Tandula** **12m mud**

Beware of the uncharted reefs in this bay. The anchorage would be exposed in bad weather but is sheltered from the swell.

**Tanimbar Islands** **07° 58'.77S, 131° 06'.17E**  
**Latdalam** **9m mud**

The anchorage is in the mouth of a small river a couple of miles to the south of Latdalam village. There are some seasonal huts on the beach. Good shelter but exposed to the west. Latdalam village is worth a visit, either along a path along the shore (very muddy when wet) or by dinghy. Try the mandi/laundry/swimming pool at the village.

**Tanimbar Islands** **07° 58'.88S, 131° 17'.38E**  
**Saumlaki** **18m sand/mud**

We found the best place to anchor was between the two jetties. If there is no space here an alternative is to the north of the new jetty in deeper water, >20m. Dinghy access to the shore is best at the Harapan Indah Hotel but this is difficult at low tide and impossible at LWS when the only access to the shore is to tie up alongside one of the local boats and walk their gangplank. Decent market and good fish market which has different fish every day depending on which boat is in. Frozen chickens are available but difficult to find. Good hardware store near the hotel which was only open in the mornings. Fuel from drums in the market or better from the fuel station 1km north of the town centre where the price varies depending on how much you buy. For some strange reason quantities >100L are more expensive. Take a bemo from outside the hotel to the fuel station.

**Tanimbar Islands** **08° 07'.91S, 130° 58'.99E**  
**Selaru Island, Labuan Olendir** **9m mud**

This is a windy place as the easterly seems to funnel over the island and the anchorage is a long way from the shore. Beware the reefs on either side on the way in, these are not visible as the water is not clear. Sheltered from all directions except the west.

**Other anchorages in the Tanimbar Islands reported by Burbridge are:**

**Tanimbar Islands** **07° 20'.46S, 131° 25'.24E**  
**Yamdena, Abat** **4 – 5m mud/sand**

Protected except from the north. Approach from the north west. No facilities.

**Tanimbar Islands** **07° 16'.9S, 131° 23'.6E**  
**Vulmali Island** **>15m sand/coral**

Approach from the east. This is very close to Ungar Island (see above) and we would not recommend the use of any of the anchorages in this area.

**Tanimbar Islands** **07° 23'.19S, 131° 12'.04E**  
**Yarngurral Island** **3m sand**

Approach from the south east. Also too close to Ungar Island.

**Tanimbar Islands** **07° 49'.20S, 131° 06'.52E**  
**Yamdena, Kolan Fanoier** **3m sand/clay**

Protected except from the west.

<b>Tanimbar Islands</b>	<b>08° 01'.80S, 131° 11'.45E</b>
<b>Nustabun Island</b>	<b>4 – 10m</b>

This was very exposed when we visited, we had strong easterly winds.

**Anchorage reported by Carter are:**

<b>Tanimbar Islands</b>	<b>08° 07'.83S, 130° 57'.04E</b>
<b>Selaru island, Namtabung</b>	

<b>Tanimbar Islands</b>	<b>07° 39'.35S, 131° 02'.35E</b>
<b>Seira Island, Wailutu</b>	<b>22m</b>

Very exposed to the west. We were not able to stop here as the anchorage is exposed and we had strong onshore winds.

<b>Tanimbar Islands</b>	<b>07° 19'.13S, 131° 13'.91E</b>
<b>NW bay of Wotup Island</b>	<b>12m</b>

Approach to the north of the small island in the mouth of the bay.

<b>Tanimbar Islands</b>	<b>07° 23'.7S, 131° 18'.65E</b>
<b>Barbaru Island</b>	<b>21m</b>

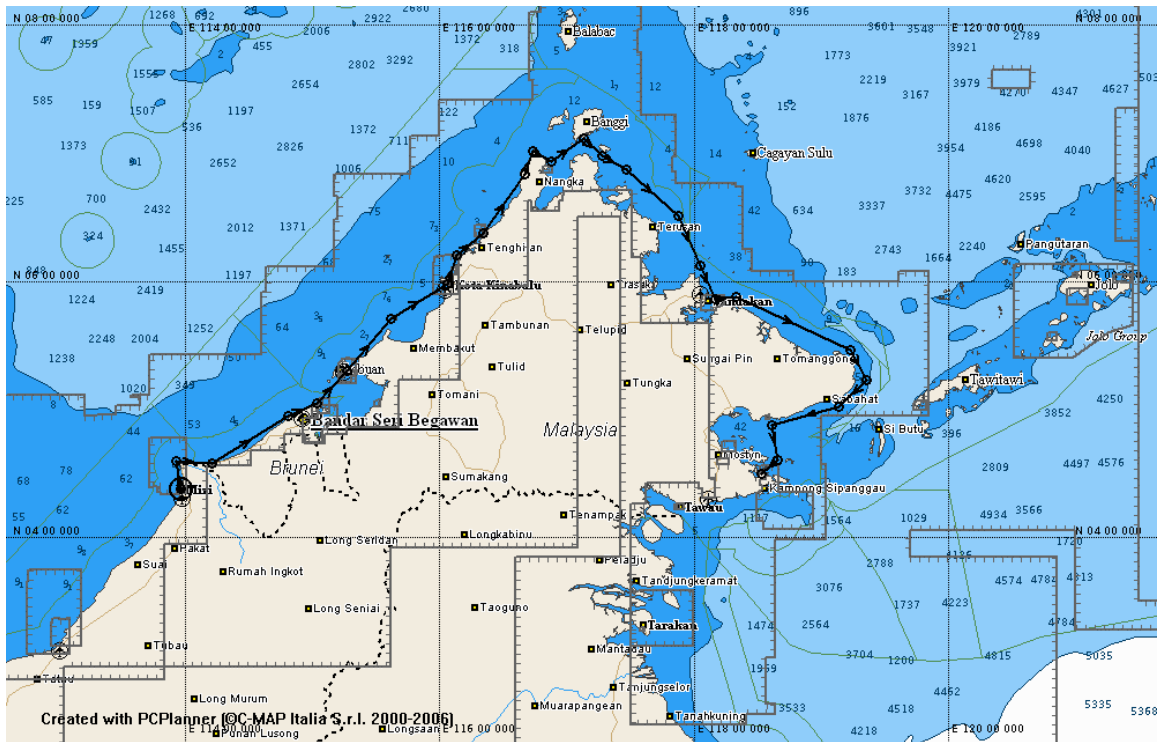
<b>Tanimbar Islands</b>	<b>07° 20'.35S, 131° 26'.10E</b>
<b>Yamdena, Kilon</b>	<b>6m</b>

<b>Tanimbar Islands</b>	<b>Position given by Carter not correct</b>
<b>Fordate Island, 2km west of Awear</b>	<b>5m</b>

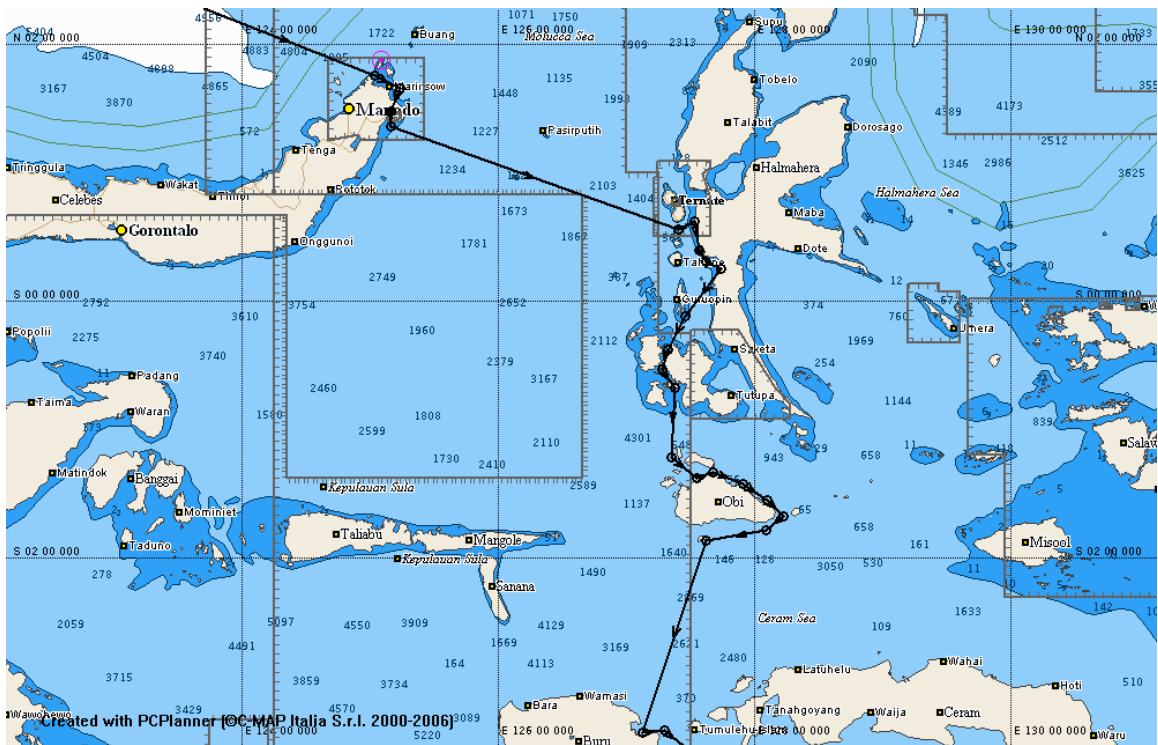
<b>Tanimbar Islands</b>	<b>No position given</b>
<b>Laibobar island</b>	<b>30m</b>

We believe the pirates who attacked us were based in Laibobar island

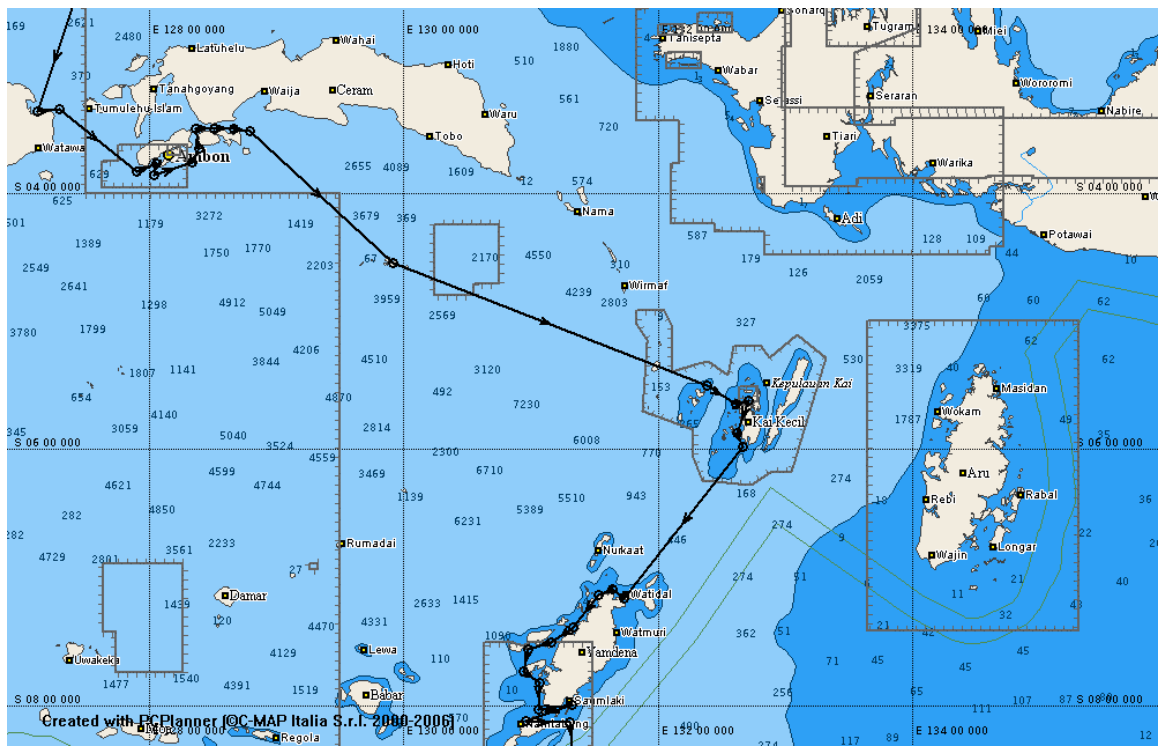




**Chart 1 Track through Borneo**



**Chart 2 Track through Indonesia, Bitung to Buru Island**



**Chart 3 Track through Indonesia, Buru Island to Tanimbar Islands**